

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

PUBLIC LEDGER

OF PHILADELPHIA.

By EUGENE H. MUNDAY.

Extracted from THE PROOF-SHEET for July, 1870.

PUBLIC LEDGER (AND DAILY TRANSCRIPT). Daily morning newspaper. Folio; nine columns; size 28½×42 inches. Published by GEORGE W. CHILDS, at the Ledger Building, S. W. corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia. Price, twelve cents a week, payable to the carriers; by mail, fifty cents a month. Type used: Nonpareil and Agate. Printed, double size, from eight sets of stereotype plates, on three of Hoe's four-cylinder and one six-cylinder rotary presses, with cutting and folding machines attached.

ON the night of the tenth of June 1870, I visited the Ledger Office for the purpose of observing the entire process of printing a morning newspaper. Entering the composing-room shortly after eleven o'clock, I found one page of the paper made up, and followed it to the stereotype foundry. In seven minutes the matrix was "beat off," and in seven minutes more it was dried in the steam-press. Three minutes afterwards the plate was moulded, and in three minutes more it was dressed ready for press. Then, more rapidly, five duplicates were made from the same matrix, the six plates being completed in three-quarters of an hour. As soon as finished, these were lowered to the press-room, and two were placed on the main cylinder of each of the three rotary presses on which the LEDGER is printed. By this time another page was in the foundry. Rapidly, dexterously, and without confusion, the six plates of it were made. The first two were sent to the press-room, and, following them down, I found them lying beside their fellows on the "Drane Press." Huge piles of paper were resting on the feed-boards, softened, smoothed, and ready for the capacious maw of the almost sentient machine, while four stalwart men stood at their posts ready to "feed" it. A long-drawn shriek, as the broad belt started the main shaft, and the press was in motion. In a few moments the "Swain Press" had received its complement of pages, and imitated the rapid motion of its brother. A short time, and the last two pages of the inside forms were safely on the "Dickens Press." Another prolonged shriek from the belting, and the massive trio joined in the whirl. More quickly than the eye could follow, sheet after sheet flew from the cylinders and apparently flitted through the air. Not so; they were safely borne by the "sheet-flyers," and deposited in heaps in the rear of the presses. When ten tokens (twenty-five hundred sheets) had been printed on each

cylinder, a rest was taken, so that the feeders might refresh themselves with something more substantial than they had been giving the presses; for the steadiest and hardest work was yet to be done. Again the machines were put in motion, and between two and three o'clock the inside forms were worked off.

The rollers were then changed. "Glue and sugar," the pressman said, "couldn't stand it all night!" The plates of the outside forms (the first and fourth pages) were now arriving in pairs. These were attached to the cylinders as before. At 2.50 the first press started, and three minutes later, the second. A little derangement in the "Swain Press" had delayed the first side, and it did not begin work on the second until three o'clock. The "Drane" and "Dickens" presses were supplied with marvellously ingenious cutters and folders, so that, as the sheets came from them, they were cut and folded ready for delivery; while in another part of the spacious room stood ten separate machines ready to fold those printed by the other press, to which the new folder had not then been attached. The scene now became intensely interesting. Twelve small cylinders rapidly revolving against three large ones, which, holding eighteen stereotype plates on their peripheries, themselves revolved with startling velocity; the rapid motions of the rollers, as they approached to and receded from the forms; the continuous play of the sheet-flyers as their long fingers placed the printed sheets before the cutters and folders; the celerity, accuracy, and apparent thoughtfulness with which these did their work; the glitter of the countless wheels and cams that hastened to perform their parts; the steady movements of the feeders as they supplied the paper to the presses—seeming more mechanical, in truth, than did the actions of those wondrous machines; the passing and repassing of men carrying the papers to the packing-room—all combined to form a scene never to be forgotten by the beholder.

And what was being accomplished? Each of those cylinders was discharging thirty-three sheets a minute, and each sheet, when cut, gave two newspapers; the twelve cylinders, then, *each minute* they ran, were producing *seven hundred and ninety-two copies* of the PUBLIC LEDGER, one side having been previously printed. Mr. Drane informed me that the presses could be run

even more rapidly; "but," he added, "it might over-tax them;" and he did not seem to be thinking of the iron, but of the life, that is in them. The presses completed their task at ten minutes before five, having occupied *four hours and twenty minutes* (including several delays and stoppages), in printing *seventy-four thousand* copies of the LEDGER, which was the edition that day.

Passing into the packing and delivering-room, I saw an example of what can be accomplished in a brief period by aid of thorough system in working. As fast as the papers were passed in they were counted and laid in hundreds, by three men, the motions of whose fingers were so rapid that they might be supposed to be stray portions of the rotary. The superintendent had before him a list of the carriers, with the number of papers each required. Enough of these were quickly packed to supply two wagons that waited at the door to convey them to distant parts of the city for delivery to the carriers of those sections. In another part of the room the various packages to go by railroad were being put up, the wrappers having been previously prepared. By the time the two wagons returned, a second load was ready for each to be taken to carriers in other directions. The carriers who obtain their papers at the office were also nearly all supplied. On the opposite side of the room, the mail list was being packed and directed; and so perfect were the arrangements, that nearly the whole edition was delivered from the office in a few minutes after the presses ceased work.

It is believed that the first effort to establish a penny paper in this city was made, about 1830, by Dr. CHRISTOPHER C. CONWELL, a nephew of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Philadelphia. The sheet was a small one, entitled *The Cent*, and was published in Second Street below Dock. Dr. Conwell was an educated, talented, and enthusiastic young man, much respected and beloved by his associates, but more a poet than a business man. His newspaper venture was soon wrecked, but *The Cent* is worthy to be remembered as the poet's foreshadowing of the practical man's LEDGER.

Several attempts were afterwards made in the same direction, and in September, 1835, William L. Drane published a few numbers of the *Daily Transcript*, "for the purpose," as he said, "of feeling the pulse of the public on the subject of a daily penny paper." The prognosis of the case was not remarkably favorable; but Mr. Drane was not dismayed, for in February, 1836, he began the regular publication of the *Transcript*.

On Friday, March 25, 1836, appeared the first number of the PUBLIC LEDGER, published at Nos. 38 and 39 Arcade,* lower story, by SWAIN, ABELL & SIMMONS; price six cents a week. It was a sheet $15\frac{1}{2} \times 21\frac{1}{2}$ inches, having four columns to a page, and was printed on a hand-press. Though by no means formidable in size, the paper had at the start a look of permanence, and in its very "make up" seemed to say, "I have come to stay." There was boldness, too, thirty-five years ago, in beginning an important undertaking on *Friday*, which was regarded by many people, besides the illiterate, as an unlucky day. But this boldness attracted attention, and provoked remark; it was a cheap advertisement.

* The Arcade extended from Chestnut to Jayne Street, on the lot now occupied by Nos. 615 to 619 Chestnut Street. The rooms were small and very inconvenient for printing purposes.

The opening address "To the Public" had that tone of conscious power with which the readers of the LEDGER have become so familiar that any other would now seem strange in its columns. Only a few extracts can be here given:—

Fully aware of the intelligence and love of improvement which pervade the population of Philadelphia, we have ventured upon the experiment of publishing a penny paper, entitled the PUBLIC LEDGER. Our object is to render it a vehicle of general and useful intelligence, adapted to the wants and interests of the community generally. While its cheapness places it within reach of the poorest artisan or laborer, we shall endeavor to furnish to the merchant and manufacturer the earliest and most useful information relating to their respective interests. We therefore hope to receive a liberal support from the mercantile and manufacturing community. We shall give no place to religious discussions; nor to political discussions involving questions of merely partisan character. The LEDGER will worship no men, and be devoted to no parties. On all political principles and questions involving the common good, it will speak freely, yet temperately. The common good is its object; and in seeking this object, it will have especial regard to the moral and intellectual improvement of the laboring classes—the great sinew of all civilized communities. While this paper shall worship no *men*, it shall vituperate none. It will be fearless and independent, applauding virtue and reproofing vice wherever found, unawed by station, uninfluenced by wealth.

The publication of this paper will be continued for *one year at least*; and the proprietors, endeavoring to deserve, will not permit themselves to doubt of receiving, LIBERAL SUPPORT.

The objects announced in this address have been fully attained, and the promises, in the main, fairly kept. In nothing has the LEDGER been more successful than in changing to respect the contempt with which cheap newspapers were regarded when it was commenced. It was then scarcely respectable even to read a paper published at less than eight dollars a year. Mr. Drane states that when he published the *Transcript*, many business men—personal friends—subscribed to encourage the undertaking. "But," he adds, "when I called at their stores, the paper was never to be seen; it would be put away on some bottom shelf; they were ashamed to let their customers know that they took a penny paper." But the LEDGER came to fight its way up, and commenced spiritedly. RUSSELL JARVIS* was engaged as editor, and addressed himself to his task with vigor and determination, while the publishers took care that no opportunity for attracting attention to the paper should be lost. Police matters were fully reported from the beginning; and these reports frequently gave offence. The LEDGER was but a week old, indeed, when it had shown its teeth to such an extent, that "some villainous scoundrel or scoundrels made a cowardly attack on

* Mr. Jarvis was a native of Massachusetts, and came to this city a short time before the LEDGER was started. He was educated for the bar, and practised his profession for a time, but abandoned it after entering on his editorial career. He was a ready and fluent writer, well informed on all general subjects, clear, forcible, and pungent in his style, quick to discern the strength or weakness of a position, and a thorough master of the art of presenting his subjects in the most favorable light their nature would allow. The success of the LEDGER from the beginning was largely due to the good fortune or discrimination of the publishers in securing his services. Mr. Jarvis subsequently began an opposition paper called the *World*, but failed as a publisher as decidedly as he had succeeded as an editor. He afterwards removed to New York, but continued to write editorials for the LEDGER until his death in 1853, in the sixty second year of his age.

the office, demolishing several panes of glass, and inflicting somewhat more serious injury to the interior."

In April, 1836, Ellen Jewett was murdered in a house of ill-fame in New York, and found in her bed with her clothing on fire. James P. Robinson, her lover, a young man of nineteen, was arrested and tried for the murder, but, though circumstantial evidence was strong against him, he was acquitted. The beauty of the victim, the youth of the prisoner, and all the circumstances of the murder combined to excite great public interest. The LEDGER printed full reports of the trial as it progressed, and, after Robinson's acquittal, reviewed the case in *six lengthy editorials*, severely criticising witnesses, counsel, judges, and jury, and strenuously arguing that the verdict was not in accordance with the facts. These articles created considerable feeling, and the larger papers were not slow in denouncing the "little virulent sheet" that presumed to read lectures to the bar and to the bench; but the LEDGER was by no means tame in replying to the "*respectable journals*."* Many subscribers fell off, but these were more than compensated for by new ones.

Scarcely had this excitement ceased, when an event of local interest occurred, which materially aided the LEDGER's circulation. A firm of cabinet-makers were charged with ill-treatment of, and furnishing insufficient food to, their apprentices, who appealed to the recorder of the city (then possessing judicial power), and had their indentures cancelled. The LEDGER at first contented itself with a brief but bitter editorial, in which the firm was denounced as being "steeped in infamy." "Nobody, surely, who is aware of their meanness, will do business with them." This procured that great *desideratum* for the new paper—a libel suit, with popular feeling on its side. Mr. Jarvis now wrote some of his best articles on "Libel," "The Liberty of the Press," &c., and the LEDGER became immensely popular by its appeal in this case to the "jury of the people."

Six months after the establishment of the paper, the proprietors were able to procure a new Napier power-press and to introduce steam; removing the office, in order to do so, to No. 8 Arcade, East Avenue. Just previous to this, the *Daily Transcript* was purchased from Mr. Drane, and its title has ever since appeared in the editorial head. Mr. Drane also became connected with the LEDGER, and has remained "even unto this day," working faithfully for its interests, putting into operation the various presses that have since been needed, and now leisurely superintending its model press-room, fitted up under his supervision.

Shortly afterwards, another event took place which was of great advantage to the enterprising "penny daily." The students of the medical colleges had been in the habit of making uproars in the streets; turning over the quaint watch-boxes in which the ancient Charleys were wont to doze; twisting knockers from doors;

creating disturbances at the theatre; pulling down signs; and otherwise demeaning themselves in accordance with the traditions of rollicking students in small towns, who use the townspeople for their sport. In January, 1837, a watchman, bolder than his fellows, arrested a couple of these larks for riotous conduct, when they resisted, and attempted to stab him. They were, however, secured, tried, and fined. The LEDGER reported this case in full, with some severe comments, in consequence of which many threats of violence were made against the paper. A few days afterwards, it opened a series of attacks on the general conduct of the students in a *four column* editorial; another of like length soon followed; and this was succeeded by frequent pungent articles on the same subject, until the evil was cured, and the frolicsome young gentlemen were taught that they were amenable to the laws. For the ability and courage displayed in this matter, the LEDGER gained the thanks of the whole community, secured popularity with all classes, and began a career of increasing prosperity, which has had but one serious check.

The first year of the LEDGER's existence proved so successful that larger accommodations were needed, and in March, 1837, the office was removed to the N. W. corner of Second and Dock streets, and the size of the paper was increased to 18×24 inches, with five columns on a page. A month later a double-cylinder "pony" press was purchased. These evidences of prosperity naturally incited opposition, and many penny dailies were started to contest the field. Of these, the most promising was the *Daily Focus*, which so scorched Mr. Jarvis in some of its articles, that he brought a suit for libel against the proprietors, Turner, Davis & Vallean, which, however, never came to trial. This paper was but short-lived; and the names of many of the others are remembered only through the following extract from an article in the LEDGER of September 26, 1837, in which it exults over the discomfiture of its competitors:—

. . . *The Times* that had no time to breathe, for it died almost as soon as born; the *Morning Post* that posted to its grave as rapidly as if it were an express post; the *Transcript* that did nothing but *transcribe*, for it could not reach originality, and transcribed nothing worth reading; the *Eagle*, that seemed more like a screech owl, and never got fledged enough to fly; the *Commercial Pilot*, that actually run upon the rocks and got shipwrecked in putting to sea; . . . the *Plain Truth*, that told nothing but lies, as the *Commercial Herald* can testify; the *North American*, that did not live long enough to tell anything."

While exulting over its rivals, the LEDGER did not cease its attacks on the "six-penny journals," and, in the article just quoted from, it advises one of its contemporaries to beware of praise from them: "One of the surest modes of destroying a penny paper is the puffing of the 'respectable six-pennies.' This operates like a mildew, and we have never known one to survive it." The editor complacently adds, "The LEDGER has never had this difficulty to contend with!" Having now become enterprising in obtaining news, able to expend considerable sums to secure early intelligence from other cities, and frequently in advance of the larger papers in this matter, the LEDGER was in the habit of illustrating its triumphs in this style:—




From the issue of May 1, 1838.

* The LEDGER was notoriously a match for any contemporary in conflicts of this kind, and on one occasion approvingly quoted the following from the *Germantown Telegraph*: "Our neighbor of the *Saturday News* seems rather sensitive upon a subject that scarcely concerns it; but as we do not wish to bandy words with a paper with which we have hitherto lived in amity, we shall hand it over—in case it wishes to break a lance with somebody—to our friend of the PUBLIC LEDGER, who keeps a sort of literary restaurateur (!), where querulous cormorants can get a 'belly-full of licking,' 'at the shortest notice, and on reasonable terms.'"

In the autumn of 1837, Messrs. Swain, Abell & Simmons began the publication of the *Weekly Ledger*, which was mainly made up out of the daily, and sold for six cents a copy.*

In 1838, occurred what were known as the "Abolition Riots." Pennsylvania Hall, at the corner of Sixth and Haines streets (on the lot now occupied by the Odd Fellows' Hall), was opened on Wednesday, the 16th of May, at 10 a. m., and addresses in opposition to slavery were delivered by William H. Burleigh and others. At that time there was a strong prejudice against colored people, and it was reported that many "niggers" attended this meeting and mixed freely with the whites. In the evening Dr. Comstock was to lecture on "Gymnastics and the Art of Curing Stammering;" but a mob collected, breaking many of the windows and injuring several persons, and the intention was abandoned. This riot was not noticed in the *LEDGER* of the next day, which contained the following advertisement:

 ANTI-SLAVERY LECTURE—By REV. G. STORRS—At the *Pennsylvania Hall*, THIS EVENING, at 8 o'clock precisely. Subject—Slavery a *moral evil*, and, in every possible circumstance, *sinful*, and altogether incompatible with the spirit of *Christianity*. Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church particularly invited to attend.
In behalf of the Wesleyan A. S. Society.

A. H. MELVILLE.

No attempt was made to deliver this lecture, and the Hall was burnt and utterly destroyed by the mob on the night of the 17th. The excitement in the city was intense, and it is fair to assume that a large proportion of the *LEDGER*'s readers at that time sympathized with the mob, which, though not large in numbers, had considerable "moral support" in the community. On the morning of the 18th, however, that paper announced the destruction of the Hall in a postscript in part of its edition, and denounced in unmeasured terms the first attack on the 16th. In an article entitled "Scandalous Outrage against Law as well as against Decency," the *LEDGER* said: "If the right of discussion upon *any* subject, a right made common to all by our constitutions and laws, both State and Federal, may be invaded with impunity, all freedom among us is abolished, and we are the slaves of the very worst of all tyrants, *the mob*." Apprehending further difficulty, it urges the mayor to call out the volunteer companies with "bayonets and *ball* cartridges." "Better is it that all the ruffians in our city, even were they a hundred thousand instead of three thousand, should bite the dust and leave their blood knee deep in the streets, than that the great principle of freedom of speech and the press be surren-

dered." While strongly repudiating any sympathy with the advocates of amalgamation, being "decidedly opposed to a mingling of the two races," the *LEDGER* philosophically denominated it "an affair of taste," and insisted on the right of each person, under the laws, to decide the question for himself.

The next night (Friday, May 18th) the Colored Shelter, an asylum for colored children in Thirteenth street above Callowhill, was attacked and fired by the mob, but was saved from destruction by the exertions of the firemen. The mob held sway until the next night (Saturday), when it was dispersed while attacking the African Church in Sixth street near Lombard; but the bitter feeling then so fearfully displayed continued for a long time.*

The course of the paper on this occasion was warmly applauded by all friends of law and order, and many who before had sneered at, now learned to respect, the penny press. After the riots had ceased, the *LEDGER* printed an able editorial on "The Rule of the Law and the Rule of the Mob," intended to incite the authorities to be prepared for any future outbreak, most truly saying, that "in all cases of apprehended disturbance of order, the only safe course is found in the most vigorous measures of prevention; in presenting, before the rioters begin, an array of force sufficient to convince them that capture and punishment are certain."

In addition to prominent public topics, the editorials of the *LEDGER* treated of a great variety of subjects, including a number of articles on temperance, in opposition to duelling, and in favor of "scratching" improper candidates from party tickets. Poetry and literary sketches quite frequently appeared, until utterly banished by the press of advertisements. Early in its career, too, this paper pointed out the confusion resulting from the manner in which houses were then numbered, and the absurdity of having two or more streets of the same name, and its articles on these subjects were continued until our present admirable system of numeration was adopted, and the nomenclature of our streets reformed.

In 1840, Local Items in the present style were introduced under the title of "City Gleanings," which were gathered by Charles Ritter, who hence became known as the *original* "Ledger man." On the 1st of July of that year, the first "Money Article" appeared, being written by Mr. Joseph Sailer, who still continues the efficient head of that valuable department of the paper.

Mr. M. Richards Mucklé entered the *Ledger* office in 1842, and has been continuously connected with the establishment as boy, youth, and man since that time. For many years he has filled the position of Cashier.


On the 9th of May, 1840, the *LEDGER* was enlarged to six columns, and printed on a sheet 20 × 29 inches; and on the 12th of October following the office was removed to the S. W. corner of Third and Chestnut streets. A further enlargement to seven columns, with a sheet 22½ × 34 inches, was made May 1, 1844, and in the summer following the *LEDGER* received the only serious check its prosperity has ever encountered.

Prior to this time, the "Native American" movement had attained considerable political importance, and the

* This was continued until May 1, 1841, when the title was changed to the *United States*, which was more literary in character, and published at \$2.00 a year. In September, 1842, this paper was sold to George R. Graham, and united with the *Saturday Evening Post*, which he then published. Four months later, however (January 25, 1843), a new weekly was issued from the *Ledger* Office; under the title of *The Dollar Newspaper*, published by A. H. Simmons & Co.—the company being Messrs. Swain & Abell. This was an excellent paper, and proved quite successful and profitable until the increased price of paper rendered the publication of a dollar weekly impossible as a paying business. After Mr. Childs purchased the entire establishment, he changed the name to *The Home Weekly and Household Newspaper*, increased the price to \$2.00 a year, expended a large sum in literary prizes, and endeavored to build up a large circulation. Finding, however, that it to some extent interfered with his management of the *LEDGER*, he sold the paper, in December, 1867, to Joseph A. Nunes, who changed its form and character, attempting to rival the *Saturday Night*. In his hands it quietly died.

* The mob made two or three demonstrations against the *Ledger* Office, but no actual violence was committed, as it was well understood that the proprietors had armed all their hands, and no one doubted Mr. Swain's courage and determination to resist an attack to the bitter end.

organ of that party—*The Sun*—had been unsparing in denunciations of the LEDGER, which had not espoused the then popular cause, and had habitually called it “the Pope’s organ.” The enlargement which took place on the 1st of May indicates, however, that public confidence in the latter paper remained unshaken. On the 3d of May, a Native American meeting was held at Second and Master streets; but it was broken up by a mob. On the 6th the LEDGER contained the following advertisement:—

 NATIVE AMERICANS! MASS MEETING.—The American Republican citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia, who are determined to support the Native Americans in their constitutional rights, peaceably assembling to express their opinions on any question of public policy, and to sustain them against the assaults of aliens and foreigners, are requested to assemble THIS AFTERNOON, May 6th, 1844, at 4 o’clock, at the corner of MASTER and SECOND streets, Kensington, to express their indignation at the recent outrage on Friday evening last, and to take the necessary steps to prevent a repetition of it. Natives, be punctual, and resolved to sustain your rights as Americans firmly but moderately.

A large meeting was held at the time specified, and again an attack was made, resulting in the killing of George Shiffler and in the wounding of several others.

It has been said by a usually careful writer that during the riots which followed, “the LEDGER, while justly condemning the excesses into which the mob ran, unfairly ignored the first great provocation which had stirred up so much ill-blood;” but that after its subscribers had fallen off by thousands, the proprietors “suddenly became aware of the fact that a great outrage had been committed upon the Americans in Kensington, before they had struck a blow in return.” This is a mistake. The LEDGER at once condemned the great outrage in an editorial on the 7th of May. It said: “The citizens who composed the meeting were assembled in the exercise of a right which is guaranteed to them by the Constitution, and it has come to a pretty pass, if, availing themselves of their constitutional rights, they are to be assailed by others, and their lives sacrificed in the streets.” The writer adds that they who created the riot were not included in the call for the meeting, and that they were there for some mischievous purpose:—

The presumption that mischief was intended is confirmed by the conduct of a reckless set of ruffians, who, a few evenings before, broke up a meeting assembled for a similar purpose. Such conduct as this is not to be tolerated with impunity in any country, much less in ours, where the hand of fellowship and good feeling has always been extended to the emigrants from other shores, and political equality so liberally offered them. It is a poor return for these favors if they are to turn round and strike at the liberty and rights of those who have so generously given them the power to do so.

On the same day that this article appeared, an immense meeting of Native Americans was held in the State House yard, and from thence the crowd marched to Kensington, and the riot was resumed; many houses being burned, and several persons killed and many wounded. On the afternoon of the 8th, St. Michael’s Church, in Second street above Master, and the adjoining Female Seminary were burnt by the mob; and in the evening St. Augustine’s Church, in Fourth street near Vine, suffered the same fate.

The following morning the LEDGER denounced the rioters, and asked: “Are our liberties to be surrendered to the rash and headlong domination of mobs, or are we to fly from this great evil to the lesser one of a consolidated military police?” Again, on the 13th, it resumed its old argument that “prevention is better than cure,” and urged the firing of ball first and blank cart-

ridges afterwards, as the only efficient manner of dispersing mobs. It complained that the rioters, in too many cases, were allowed to “fight it out;” and concluded by saying that, “in subduing a mob the whole secret is to strike first and threaten afterwards.” This article created intense indignation among the Native Americans, and thousands dropped the paper. The advertising patronage also largely decreased.

The LEDGER continued to demand that the supremacy of the law should be maintained, and that both the “church burners” and “those outlaws who broke up the meeting at Kensington,” should be sought out and punished. Notwithstanding this show of impartiality, the course of the paper was by no means satisfactory to a large majority of the people, and it was not until the passions of the time had cooled that the lost circulation and advertising were regained; and then only as a result of careful management.

The first rotary press ever built was first used to print the LEDGER April 9, 1847, on a Friday, which seems to have been regarded as a “red-letter day” in its calendar. This was a four-cylinder press, invented by Richard M. Hoe, and ordered by Mr. Swain for his paper before the details were perfected. The proposition to place type on a cylinder and whirl it around was scouted as an absurdity by nearly all printers. Mr. Swain, however, had intelligent faith in Colonel Hoe’s theory, and Mr. Drane possessed the rare mechanical skill necessary to put the machine into successful operation.

On the morning of the 30th of December, 1850, just after the edition of the paper had been printed, a serious fire occurred in the Ledger Building, destroying the upper stories and the valuable material they contained. But the following day the LEDGER appeared as usual, the proprietors receiving all needed assistance from the other newspaper offices.

On the 9th of December, 1855, Mr. Azariah H. Simmons, junior member of the Ledger firm, died of congestion of the lungs, in the forty-ninth year of his age,* and on the 1st of January following the firm became Swain & Abell—the surviving partners purchasing Mr. Simmons’s share. The paper continued to be published under this firm-name until April 18, 1861; but for more than two years after that date the LEDGER was printed anonymously. On the 16th of May, 1863, however, it was announced as being published by Wm. M. Swain & Co.—Mr. Abell being the company.†

* Mr. Simmons was not much known in connection with the LEDGER, although his far-seeing and practical suggestions impressed themselves on the paper. He accompanied Mr. Abell to Baltimore and assisted in establishing the *Sun* in that city, but afterwards returned to Philadelphia, and gave his attention mainly to *The Dollar Newspaper*. Mr. Abell remained in Baltimore, and from that time took no active part in the management of the LEDGER, being fully employed in conducting the *Sun* of that city, which was also owned by Swain, Abell & Simmons.

† Mr. Wm. M. Swain was the master mind in conducting the LEDGER. He was a man of untiring energy, and great force of character; clear in his plans, and strong and self-reliant in their execution. Plain in speech and manner, with no great advantages derived from education or early association, his merits were not showy, but real and substantial. For twenty years he gave unremitting attention to the LEDGER, carefully scanning all that entered its columns, and especially devoting himself to the perfecting of the necessary machinery—his love for which amounted almost to a passion. It is questionable whether he recurred to any event in his life with so much pride as to his connec-

The great increase in the price of white paper and of labor during the war rendered the publication of a one cent journal impossible, except at a loss to the proprietors. Messrs. Swain & Abell are said to have sacrificed more than one hundred thousand dollars by continuing the LEDGER at "six and a quarter cents per week." Finally, being unable to agree to increase the price of the paper or the rates of advertising, and to prevent further loss, they determined to dispose of the entire establishment. It is no exaggeration to say that the whole community was startled when the announcement of the sale was first made, after it had been consummated, on Saturday, December 3, 1864.

On the following Monday, Mr. GEORGE W. CHILDS began his brilliant career as publisher of the PUBLIC LEDGER, and received a warm welcome from the leading journals of the country, to which he was known as the successful publisher of many valuable books.

The circulation and advertising of the paper were larger than at any previous time; but, as has been stated, it was impossible to continue the publication at the original price, except at a great loss. Accordingly, on the 10th of December, 1864, Mr. Childs increased the price to twelve cents per week, but this was reduced a month later to ten cents—the present price. The rates of advertising were also advanced, being made to correspond more nearly, considering the LEDGER's circulation, with those of other journals. These changes caused ominous conjectures, and many predicted a speedy and fatal decrease in the support that had made the paper an "institution" of our city. There was, indeed, an immediate and considerable falling off of subscribers. But the defection was soon repaired, new elements of strength and popularity were introduced, and the circulation of the LEDGER has since steadily increased, until it now exceeds seventy thousand daily. This statement is not based on mere surmise. On making known to Mr. Childs my intention of preparing this article, every possible facility was afforded me for procuring correct data, even to the extent of opening the books of the establishment for full and free examination. From these I gather that the entire edition of the LEDGER from January 1 to May 31, 1870, was 9,393,500 copies—a daily average of 72,818. Making allowance for spoiled copies, the actual circulation for the period given may be stated at 72,000 a day [average daily circulation—1876—93,000. Taking the average of readers of each paper at five, we have 465,000 persons reading the LEDGER each day!*

It is easy to ascertain and state these figures, but who shall estimate the vastness of the influence that must be exerted by a newspaper thus day after day addressing such a multitude of people of all classes, especially

tion with the introduction of the Rotary Press. He early became deeply interested in the magnetic telegraph, and was one of the most efficient promoters of Prof. Morse's plans for its introduction. Mr. Swain died on the 16th of February, 1868, in the sixtieth year of his age.

* The following details of the distribution of this large edition, taken from the admirably kept account-book of the night clerk, are not without interest. On May 31, 1870, the edition was 72,000. Of these, 55,941 were distributed by 99 carriers, in numbers varying from 61 to 1616; 3708 were sold to newsboys; and 595 at the office—making the circulation, in the closely-built portion of Philadelphia, 60,244. About 2000 were sent to mail subscribers, and the balance of the edition was distributed in packages to various towns and stations, principally in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.

when, as in the case of the LEDGER, it has the reputation of being carefully correct in its statements? And who shall accurately measure the degree of responsibility resting on the man who wields this immense power? Happily for the community, the publisher of the LEDGER, conscious of its power, is fully alive to the responsibility of his position, and exercises unceasing vigilance to guard against the dissemination of any corrupting virus through its columns.

The LEDGER was formerly conducted on the theory that a newspaper is a "common carrier" of information between the people, and therefore bound to print whatever may be offered as an advertisement, provided it be not libellous or positively indecent *in terms*. This theory, still very generally acted on, assumes that the publisher is responsible only for the character of his editorial matter and the reliability of his news. Immediately on purchasing the paper, Mr. Childs determined to assume responsibility for the character of *all* the matter in its columns, and asserted his right to reject any advertisement that he might deem objectionable on the score of public morals. This determination led to the exclusion of a large and profitable class of advertisements, amounting to not less than \$15,000 a year. The risk assumed by the publisher appeared to be great; but the result proved the correctness of his judgment that the people of Philadelphia would sustain their most popular paper in its advanced position. The discrimination exercised in regard to advertisements has been judicious; it has not been forgotten that the LEDGER is a secular *news* paper, and that the people are entitled to a wide latitude in making known their business or wants one to another. So far, then, from the new rule proving detrimental to the interests of the paper, the advertising patronage so largely increased as to render an enlargement to eight columns necessary in September, 1865; thus the LEDGER now has 1573 square inches of printed matter, while the first number contained only 525 square inches. [The surface of printed matter is now, 1876, greatly increased, amounting to 2113 square inches.]

Early in 1865, the stereotyping process and other mechanical improvements were introduced, by means of which the large edition was delivered to subscribers at a much earlier hour than before. In November of that year the editorial corps of the LEDGER suffered a severe loss in the death of Mr. Washington L. Lane,* who had been connected with it since 1837, and was the principal director of the paper for many years.

The building at the S. W. corner of Third and Chestnut streets had for a long time been too contracted for the business there conducted, and shortly after purchasing the establishment Mr. Childs began making arrangements for a removal. The first step in this direction was the purchase of the brown-stone struc-

* In a most feeling tribute to the memory of Mr. Lane, the LEDGER said: "He possessed a fine analytical mind which matured and strengthened by extensive reading and reflection, and coupled with a retentive memory and unusual equanimity of temper, peculiarly fitted him for the arduous and frequently trying duties of an editor. While a man of very decided opinions, ever frank and open in their expression, his calm and dispassionate manner in discussion gave to his arguments and reasoning a conservative tone and bearing peculiarly appropriate to one teaching through the medium of a popular newspaper, read by people of all classes, all ages, and of every pursuit. He probably had no superior for the position he held so long and filled so well."

ture at the S. W. corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets, known as the Howell Building. Several adjoining lots were also purchased, and on the 1st of May, 1866, work was commenced under the contract for the erection of the present Ledger Building, which was completed and formally opened on the 20th of June, 1867. The ceremonies at the building were of a highly interesting character, and were followed by a grand banquet at the Continental Hotel, at which were gathered many eminent men from different parts of the country, assembled to honor the proprietor and his enterprise.

It is impossible here to speak in detail of the Ledger Building; nor is it necessary to do so. It is one of the attractions and ornaments of our city; freely open at all times to citizens and strangers, who are courteously escorted through the various departments. It is estimated that not less than one hundred thousand persons have availed themselves of this privilege. Beautiful in its exterior, it is still more to be commended for the perfect adaptation of the interior to the purposes for which the building is designed, and nothing is hazarded in saying that the LEDGER has the most perfect newspaper office in this country, if not in the world. In its construction especial care was taken to provide good ventilation and a plentiful supply of light; and the proprietor has erected bath-rooms in the press-room, composing-room, and in the job department for the benefit of the workmen. Nothing, in short, that judicious liberality could attain has been left undone to provide for the comfort of all engaged in the establishment.

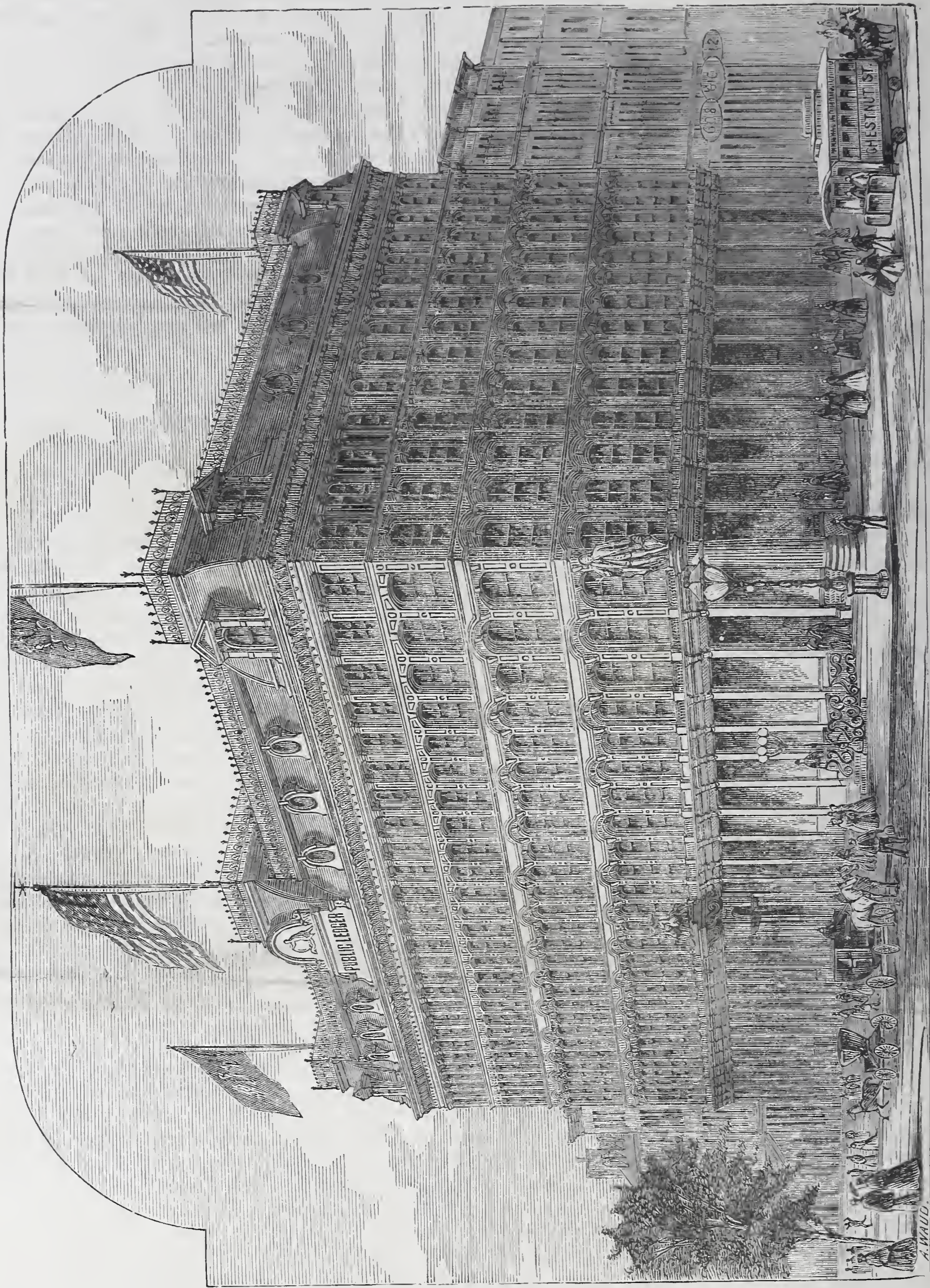
One of the most important matters in the business management of the LEDGER is the "Carrier System." Shortly after the paper was established, the city was laid off into "routes," which were given to reliable men to be canvassed. No one was permitted to sell a single copy of the paper on another's territory. At first, papers were given to the carriers on credit, but the strict cash principle was soon introduced, requiring all papers to be paid for before they left the office. As the circulation increased, these routes became valuable, and are now in constant demand. The LEDGER is not sold to newsboys and others until an hour after all the carriers have been supplied, who are thus protected from interference. The perfection to which the carrier system has been brought gives this paper the marked peculiarity and great advantage of having a circulation that does not fluctuate from day to day. Based almost exclusively on subscriptions to the carriers, the circulation is perfectly steady, only changing by gradual increase.

The great influence exerted by the PUBLIC LEDGER is largely attributable to the care that has for many years been exercised to prevent the appearance of extravagant statements in its columns. The imperative rule is to understate rather than overstate. Many years ago, when election returns came in slowly and vaguely, it was the LEDGER's report that almost invariably proved correct, though in those days its bias towards the Democratic party was quite visible. During the war of the rebellion, while consistently and potently supporting the government, it steadily resisted the many temptations of becoming sensational, and since the conflict ceased has exerted its influence for the re-establishment of substantial peace and good feeling between the two sections. As soon, too, as the pressing danger that seemed to render arbitrary acts on the part of the government

necessary had disappeared, the LEDGER was among the first to demand a return to regular forms of legal procedure, and, true to its traditions, advocated the supremacy of the law. In the case of the assassins of President Lincoln, it strongly and effectively protested against the secret trial that had been determined on by the government, and its loyalty was at once assailed by some over-zealous journals. But the government reconsidered its decision, and the trial was held publicly.

Throughout its long career the PUBLIC LEDGER has advocated every improvement which has tended to increase the prosperity of the city and the welfare of its citizens, even when these were strongly opposed. The consolidation of the city and districts, and the introduction of passenger railways and of steam fire-engines may be specially mentioned. Its advocacy of the latter made it for a time quite unpopular with the firemen, who were in the habit of groaning the paper when they ran by its office. It early advocated free bridges over the Schuylkill, and was most persistent and efficient in directing public opinion in favor of our large and beautiful park. It may be said to have *created* a class of advertisements that contributes so largely to the revenue which is derived from this branch of the business. "Wants," "Boarding," "For Sale," "To Let," &c., had no existence, as they now appear, when the LEDGER started, but have "grown with its growth and strengthened with its strength." The large number of Society and Religious notices—which help to make the advertisements of this paper *news* to a large number of readers—are of still later introduction. The full list of Marriages and Deaths is another special feature of its columns. In fine, few newspapers are so thoroughly *read* by subscribers, and so carefully scanned by editors as is this journal.

Mr. GEORGE W. CHILDS, the present proprietor of the PUBLIC LEDGER, has enlarged its usefulness and widely extended its influence. His sagacity and tact enabled him to tide the paper over a perilous point in its course, and to make changes in its management which, under a less skilful pilot, would have wrecked it. He has proved his capacity and his fitness to control a great journal which is at once an exponent and moulder of public opinion, and unquestionably a power in the land. He joins to the rare qualities of his brain a goodness of heart that constantly manifests itself in acts of considerate benevolence, and possesses a magnetism of manner that draws and attaches to him multitudes of friends. "As a true journalist," said the Hon. John T. Hoffman, late Governor of New York, "he appreciates and understands the difference between the liberty of the press and the license of the press. He deals boldly with public matters and with public men in connection with them; but he is always careful to recollect that private character is private property, owned by that most sacred of all circles, the family circle, and that the man who needlessly assails it, is as much a criminal as if he robbed the household of its dearest treasures, or plucked from it, for his own base uses, its fairest flower. He understands, what I wish all editors in America understood, not only the power of the press, but its proper uses, and its great mission; and by his daily conduct and life declares his opinion, that the man who owns a printing-press, and can use a pen, has no more right to indite libels, and stamp private reputation, than the owner of a uniform and a sword has to cut and kill to please his fancies, or to gratify his malice."



PUBLIC LEDGER BUILDING, SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF SIXTH AND CHESTNUT STREETS, PHILADELPHIA.

GEORGE W. CHILDS, Proprietor.